


**CRIMINAL COMPLAINT**  
(Submitted electronically)

<b>United States District Court</b>	DISTRICT of ARIZONA
<b>United States of America</b> <b>v.</b> <b>Eric RIDENOUR</b> DOB: 1964; United States Citizen	DOCKET NO.  MAGISTRATE'S CASE NO. <b>23-01853MJ</b>
Complaint for violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 844(i)	
<b>COMPLAINANT'S STATEMENT OF FACTS CONSTITUTING THE OFFENSE OR VIOLATION:</b> On or about May 22, 2023, in Douglas, in the District of Arizona, defendant <b>Eric RIDENOUR</b> did maliciously damage or destroy, or attempt to damage or destroy, by means of fire or an explosive, two buildings, to wit: Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church at 749 11th Street and First Presbyterian Church at 1020 D Avenue, used in interstate or foreign commerce or in any activity affecting interstate or foreign commerce; in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 844(i).	
<b>BASIS OF COMPLAINANT'S CHARGE AGAINST THE ACCUSED:</b>  On May 22, 2023, ATF Special Agents responded to two church fires in Douglas, Arizona. Earlier 911 calls had reported smoke coming out of a church located at the corner of 11th Street and D Avenue in Douglas, Arizona. Upon arrival, the Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, located at 749 11th Street, had large amounts of smoke emitting from the structure to include the attached uninhabited two-story residence to the south. While the Douglas Fire Department was working to extinguish the fire at that location, smoke was seen coming out of the First Presbyterian Church, located at 1020 D Avenue, directly adjacent to Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church within the same block. The Douglas Fire Department then began fire suppression efforts at that location as well.  Special Agents from ATF, along with the Douglas Fire Department and Douglas Police Department, began to investigate the two fires. Investigators entered the First Presbyterian Church and observed fire damage concentrated toward the altar, in the northwest corner, that had collapsed into the basement or crawlspace area of the building. Investigators located a bottle of lighter fluid behind the offering table, at the base of the steps, near the altar. Remnants of what appeared to be lighters were also found.  On May 23, 2023, surveillance footage was obtained from a nearby day care center located at 721 11th Street. Surveillance cameras were positioned in various locations around the building including one facing the eastern alley towards D Avenue.  <b>(BASIS OF COMPLAINT CONTINUED ON REVERSE.)</b>	
<b>DETENTION REQUESTED</b> Being duly sworn, I declare that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.  Authorized by AUSAs Wang/Arellano <i>Raquel Arellano</i>	SIGNATURE OF COMPLAINANT (official title)  OFFICIAL TITLE Nathan Skidmore, Special Agent (ATF)
Sworn to telephonically. SIGNATURE OF MAGISTRATE JUDGE <sup>1)</sup> <i>James M. Merrill</i>	DATE May 24, 2023

<sup>1)</sup> See Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure Rules 3, 4.1 and 54

**(BASIS OF COMPLAINANT'S CHARGE AGAINST THE ACCUSED CONTINUED.)**

The surveillance footage showed that on May 22, 2023, at approximately 10:38 a.m., a blue Pontiac Aztec arrived in the alleyway and parked west of Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, near the southwest corner wall. At approximately 10:40 a.m., a male subject exited the vehicle and walked north along the wall carrying a plastic bag. The subject then walked out of view of the camera. At 10:42 a.m., the subject is seen walking back south along the wall and towards the vehicle. The subject then walked in a southeast direction towards the First Presbyterian Church. Still on foot, the subject entered the area between the church's hall and classroom buildings and out of view of the camera. At approximately 10:45 am, the subject reappeared on camera on the northern sidewalk in the 700 block of 10th Street. The footage then shows the subject jogging north along the western side of the classroom building. At approximately 10:46 a.m., the subject entered the Pontiac Aztec and drove west along the alley towards E Avenue. At this time, smoke is seen emanating from the uninhabited two-story residence attached to Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church.

Through law enforcement databases, ATF agents determined that only one blue Pontiac Aztec is currently registered to an individual residing in Douglas, Arizona. The blue Pontiac Aztec, bearing Arizona license plate 1GA5CTA, is registered to **Eric RIDENOUR** of Douglas, Arizona.

At approximately 6:30 p.m. on May 23, 2023, law enforcement officers from the Douglas Police Department and Special Agents from ATF and FBI served a search warrant on **RIDENOUR**'s residence and vehicle in Douglas. ATF Accelerant Detection Canine, "Zeta," alerted to the presence of accelerants (a flammable substance used to aid the spread of fire) on pants located inside the residence that matched the appearance of pants worn by the subject on the surveillance video from May 22, 2023. A green hat matching the appearance of one worn by the subject in the surveillance video was located in **RIDENOUR**'s blue Pontiac Aztec. "Zeta" also alerted to the presence of accelerants on shoes worn by **RIDENOUR**, which matched those worn by the subject on the surveillance video. Agents observed **RIDENOUR** to have a distinctive gait to his walk that also matched the subject seen on the surveillance video.

Surveillance footage from earlier in the day on May 22, 2023, obtained from the Walmart located in Douglas, Arizona, showed **RIDENOUR** wearing what appears to be the same shirt, pants, hat, and shoes as seen on the subject in the surveillance footage from the day care center around the time the fires are believed to have started.

As a result of the fires, Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church and First Presbyterian Church both suffered extensive damage. The fires continued to re-ignite throughout the evening and the following day. The structure of Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church was almost completely destroyed. The roof of the First Presbyterian Church collapsed in the early morning hours of May 23, 2023, and the fire caused extensive internal damage.

Both Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church and First Presbyterian Church are used in and are involved in activities affecting interstate or foreign commerce. Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church is a member church of the worldwide Anglican Communion, comprised of dioceses throughout the United States and in over 165 countries. The First Presbyterian Church is a member church of the national Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA) network, headquartered in Louisville, Kentucky. Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church regularly hosted Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings in the building. AA is a national and international organization geared towards abstinence-based recovery. In addition, the First Presbyterian Church made preparations to serve as a shelter for up to 50 undocumented non-citizen asylum seekers crossing the international border from Mexico into the United States, in conjunction with the expiration of Title 42 provisions implemented during the Covid-19 national public health emergency.

**(BASIS OF COMPLAINT CONTINUED.)**



**(BASIS OF COMPLAINANT'S CHARGE AGAINST THE ACCUSED CONTINUED.)**



Fire damage at First Presbyterian Church building

**(BASIS OF COMPLAINT CONTINUED.)**



**(BASIS OF COMPLAINANT'S CHARGE AGAINST THE ACCUSED CONTINUED.)**



Fire damage at Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church building